l: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala MD4

looted the scanty greyish-green pasture before their hungry mouths. Not a trace of vegetation survived their passage. They left behind nothing but naked, trampled earth, and over it a veil of dust and mist that hung in the still air for hours.

At the head of the advancing nation, in front of the centre of the first line, strode one fawn-colored camel, bearing on its back a singular structure adorned with hundreds of small tufts of black ostrich feathers and barbaric decorations. The large framework of acacia wood was balanced and secured on a saddle of special design. It was the *Markab*, the "Ship", also called *Abu-Dubur*, "Father of the Ages"—the Ark of Ishmael. It is the altar before which Bedouins for centuries have made their votive and thank-offerings. There is only one such Ark in all Arabia. For ages past it has moved from tribe to tribe, as one conquered the other. The Ruala had held it now for nearly one hundred and fifty years, and to them it has become the symbol of their unity and their emblem of war,—the tribal Great Banner, as it were. This ancient and hallowed standard, the Ruala will tell you, has been moved by the spirit of Allah at critical periods in their history, especially in grave and decisive conflicts, to reveal to them when and where to face the enemy and join battle.

This day, too, they expected to see God's presence and protection revealing themselves in mystic signs from the old frame on the camel's back.

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XVII

The War Goddess

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TRA'D IBN SATTAM hurried with me to the sacred Standard, which rose high above the travelling-litters. We made our way through an agitated throng. The buzz of women's and children's voices intermingled with the grunting and complaining of laden camels. On nearer approach I noticed a group of women afoot, threading their way to the Standard; they waved their head-cloths and kept up a high-pitched chant. They were escorting a young woman, walking sedately in their midst. It was Tuēma. Her beautiful serene face was radiant and aglow with health. Her eyes under their long lashes were grave and devout, but she had a bright glance for Tra'd ibn Sattam, who had chosen her out of all the Rûala maidens for the signal honour of riding in the *Markab*, and on recognizing me her cheeks dimpled with a smile.

When Tuēma and her train of women had come up with the camel which bore the tribal symbol, a tall powerful animal led by a slave, she ran by its side for a space. The trilling and waving of the women rose to a joyous frenzy. Suddenly Tuēma broke away from her retinue, and with a running start grasped the camel's shoulder-girth and climbed nimbly on to its back and into the Palladium. In the left fore-corner of the sacred structure was a seat with a footrest, and on this she composed herself, enthroned on high like a desert queen above her

l: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala MD4

people. Thereupon, she untied her head-cloth and her glorious tresses fell over her shoulders. At a sign from her, the escorting women, who had continued to walk beside the camels, climbed up again to their several litters.

From the midst of the migrating multitude now came the sounds of shots fired in jubilation, and soon tribesmen were galloping forward from all directions. They assembled and in a body raced toward the *Markab*, Faris at their head. Amidst the thunder of hoofs and the glint of carbines, there arose the wild chant of the young men as they pressed around their queen.

Tuëma had risen and stood erect in the lofty frame. Her face became transfigured in an ecstasy of joy. Suddenly she put both her hands to her throat and tore open her dress and broke into jubilant song. With bared breast she rose, straining her supple body until she was poised high above the ark, holding aloft a bunch of snow-white ostrich plumes. She looked like a goddess—the bravest and most beautiful maiden of her great tribe. She cried to the youths words of passionate eloquence. She inflamed them with warlike ardour. She exhorted them to remember the heroes who once had chained themselves to this Standard by means of the iron shackles of their mares, so that they might not leave their queen, but defend her to the last breath.

Faris's eyes were fixed in rapture on Tuëma, on her lofty throne. In his hand flashed the sword of Jidua, a great hero of the Ruala. He carried the historic blade to his lips with both hands and kissed it. "O Tuëma,

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Tuëma had meanwhile returned to her own dwelling at the lower end of the valley. Her girl friends had been busy selecting the handsomest camel-litter and decorating it for the occasion. With its ornate marriage canopy it was mounted on a fine, gorgeously caparisoned camel, which slaves then led to Tuëma's tent. There the bride mounted to her lofty seat between the slender horns of the camel-litter and, with songs and shouts and waving of scarves, her girl friends escorted her to the tent of the bridegroom.

Before the women's quarters, but so arranged that Faris on his couch could see everything, Tuëma made her camel kneel down. Faris's mother and sisters, attended by numerous men and women slaves, greeted and received the bride ceremoniously.

Close by, Mnahi held an old white battle-mare by the halter. Auda, "the helper", she was called, and also the "Virginal Kuhaylat-Ajuz", for she had never been mated. The Ruala all but worshipped her as sacred. As a three-year-old she had been presented to Misha'il as a gift, on the birth of her son, Amir Fuaz. The mare was thus twenty-seven years old and her body bore the scars of many a raid. Over her back was spread a white lamb's-skin rug, the "Virgin Fleece" which, according to immemorial custom, the Bedouin bride brings to the bridegroom as a wedding gift.

Tuëma had disappeared into the harem to be attired in her wedding dress by Faris's mother and sisters. When she came out again, she was resplendent in a rich cashmere gown woven in red and green (it had been worn by Faris's mother at her own bridal ceremony) and a

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XXI

The "Ark of Ishmael"

TO THE BEDOUINS of Arabia, the *Markab* has a significance such as the Palladium had to the Trojans. They all hold the belief that the possession of this symbol, much like the Israelitish "Ark of the Covenant", means safety and power to the tribe holding it, while its loss spells disaster to the tribe and its subsequent dispersion. The Ruala have held it uninterruptedly for nearly a century and a half, but even to-day the sight of "Ishmael's camel-throne", with the chosen maiden sitting on it in times of war, will inspire them to greater heroism. The warriors composing its guard of honour are the picked troops of the tribe. They vouch for its safety with life and limb; they are, above all others, the heroes of Arabia.

Before coming into the keeping of the Ruala, the *Markab* was held by the Amarat. More precisely, it was in possession of the Ibn Hadhdhal family of that tribe until 1793. In that year the Wuld'Ali, a tribe in alliance with the Ruala, made war on the Amarat. Jidua ibn Mubadir, a Rueyli then visiting the Wuld'Ali, took part in the campaign. At the height of the decisive battle, so the tale is told, this Rueyli, with permission from the Wuld'-Ali chieftain, flung himself on the horsemen guarding the *Markab* (with the Amarat maiden enthroned in it), cut his way through single-handed, and with one blow of the sword cut off one of the legs of the camel bear-

1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala MD4

ing the emblem of the tribe, and brought it to the ground. With the sudden overthrow of the Holy Standard, the resistance of the Amarat also broke down and, terror-stricken, they suffered a crushing defeat.

On the battlefield the victors found Jidua, killed from ambush by a foot-soldier, and the Amarat maiden of the camel throne—Jamila—who had stabbed herself to death so as not to survive the shame of her people's defeat. The Wuld'Ali, indeed, claim to this day that Jidua had been Jamila's lover; for, they say, the lifeless bodies of those two were found side by side beneath the collapsed *Markab,* and one of Jamila's hands was still clenched round the hilt of her dagger while her other hand clasped the hand of Jidua.

After the defeat of the Amarat, the *sheykh* of the Wuld'Ali presented the *Markab* and with it Jidua's sword, now famous, to the Ruala, since it was a Rueyli who had overthrown the *Markab* and thus brought about the victory to the Wuld'Ali. Since then this sacred emblem has been in the hands of the Sha'lan family and has accompanied the Ruala in all their victorious wars, a symbol of their dominant position among all the Bedouin tribes of Arabia.

Of Jidua's sword—Thu'l-Hayyatu—"the-one-endowed-with-life"—there is also an older legend, which the aged Prince Nuri Sha'lan thus related to me:

In the fifth century of the Hegira (the twelfth by our reckoning) when the 'Anaza Bedouins were still grazing their camels south of Teyma at the Jabal Bird, it happened on the sacred pilgrim's road to Mecca from Damascus. Janda ibn Mubadir, an ancestor of Jidua, was

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travelling with his clan toward Khaybar, seeking the *Dira* (pasture grounds) by the Jabal Abyadh and in the Wadi Rama. One still dark night, when the red campfires flickered in the tents, the air was suddenly filled with a terrific roaring. A mighty thunder-clap rent the sky, the ground trembled and swayed, and the whole world seemed to be tumbling. Every living thing leapt up in mortal terror and ran hither and thither. From the midst of the dark heavens above there broke forth a light that shone over the quaking earth with swiftly growing brilliance, until in a moment it had equalled the luminous power of the noonday sun and surpassed its heat. It blinded men and beasts and struck them down. The earth split; a sound of hissing, tearing, and crashing beyond the power of description filled the air, and a sulphurous smoke hung over the scarred earth.

When morning dawned it was found that many persons had been struck dead; their mutilated bodies were lying about. A crater-like scar marked the place where an unusually large meteorite had buried itself. In addition, a number of men and camels had disappeared without trace into the bowels of the earth, buried forever under sand and stones.

Janda ibn Mubadir and his war-mare, as well as two of his camels, lay dead before the wreck of his torn and partly burned tent. From opposite ends of the desert, from Haleb (Aleppo) in the north and el-Tayef (near Mecca) in the south, came reports that this exceptionally brilliant meteor, with its eerie sound, like "ker-ker-ker", had been observed, and that even the noise of its striking had been heard.

l: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala MD4

Some years afterwards some bolder spirits among the Bedouins nerved themselves to examine the hole torn in the earth. To their joy, these Bedouins discovered that the rift, widened and cleared by them, began to fill with water. Bir er-Ra'ad (the Thunder Fountain) they named the well. During the excavation, they found small fragments of the splintered "messenger-from-the-sky." A son of Ibn Mubadir took one such fragment from the meteor and fashioned from it a sword two and a half feet long. It gleams to-day as it did then, as if it were brand-new. It is of a bluish tint without one rust stain, and fine silvery wavy marks run down the precious blade, which is as light as a feather. A silversmith of Damascus made a handsome hilt and an equally handsome scabbard for it, and another artist engraved the blade with Arabic runes in gold.

"The Sword-of-Janda-and-Jidua" is thus, in the truest sense, a gift of heaven, and that is why it is called also the "Sword of God" and "The Life-endowed One."

000 When, at the end of that time of grievous famine, the Ruala had entered the life-giving pastures of the Fid'an and Saba, Amir Nuri Sha'lan presented me with this sword, to keep in remembrance of this adventure and my share in it.

I need not say how much I treasure it.

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date)1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

hang the cradle, *rûǧâḥa*, which is made of a quilted cover and has a rope tied to its four corners, high up to the tent poles. If, then, *as-sarʿa* comes into the tent, she looks for the child on the beds made on the floor and takes no notice of the cradle hanging from above.

Another evil spirit appears in the shape of a big greyhound bitch, *seleḳa*, with an enormous jaw and a breastbone, *zowr*, reaching to the ground. This spirit, known as *saʿaluwwa*, is the only spirit which appears in the wide level desert and lives in dens such as are used by the hyenas. A traveler, *ṭurḳi*, a member of the Mseke kin which belongs to the ʿEbede division, once met what he thought to be a *seleḳa* in the desert. He made it come to him, believing that it might lead him to the camp it had left. But instead of being a *seleḳa*, it proved to be a *saʿaluwwa* who jumped at him, tore flesh from his breast and face, sucked his blood, and did not leave him till he was half dead. When finally found by other travelers, all he could do was to tell what had happened to him before departing this life, *râḥ*.

A *ḳurṭa* or *ḳârûz* is a spirit who destroys newly born boys but does his work unobserved. If a Rwejli is married to a woman who has borne him several boys all of whom have died after a short time, and if the same thing happens also with the second wife, then he knows for certain that it is a *ḳurṭa* who has done him this wrong. To appease the spirit he procures a cock with green feathers on its neck and waits until his wife comes to childbed again. When her time is near, with the live cock he draws in his tent seven circles, one within the other, kills the cock in the seventh in the center, buries it there, and lays his wife over that spot. She will then bear without any pain, and her son will not die, because the *ḳurṭa* has been given what belonged to it. *baḳḳ al-ḳârûz*.

REVERENCE FOR GRAVES RARE AMONG BEDOUINS

The Bedouins know of no communion with the saints. In the whole inner desert there is not a single holy grave or shrine erected in honor of a saint. In fact they have no saints whatever. When they make their short sojourns in the settled territory, where by every village the dome of a shrine rises above the real or imaginary grave of some man or woman

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whom public opinion considers to be a saint, they never pay attention to these domes. In their opinion the latter commemorate the saints of the settlers and breeders of goats and sheep, *rî'* or *šwâja*, not of the Bedouins. They say: "They are not of our kin, *ahl*, not of us, *ǧemâ'atna*, therefore we do not honor them or go on pilgrimage to them, *ḥenna alli mâ hw minna mâ nezûreh*."

Worship of the saints has never been known among the Rwala and presumably never will be. The hereafter does not trouble the Bedouins much, and their idea of it is only hazy; nor have they any permanent burying places, *meǧenne*, but bury their dead wherever death overtakes them. They therefore do not know and never visit individual graves. This is often due to the great distance between their pastures; to some of their camping grounds they return only after many years — so why should they care for a grave? They do not know even where the graves of their older princes or head chiefs are. I have heard from many Rwala, even from members of the reigning kin, that Nâjef eben Ša'lân, one of their ancestors, lies buried between the rain pools of Haǧm and al-Bark in al-Ḥamâd and that a camel is sacrificed by his descendants whenever they come there, as they do once in many years. Yet while we camped in that place in 1914 and took our drinking water from both the pools, not a single member of the reigning house thought for a moment of sacrificing the camel on Nâjef's grave. Hazzâ', Prince an-Nûri's father, died at al-Ǧubejlijje in the Ḥawrân and was buried there, but his grave has never been visited by an-Nûri, although he often marches past the place.

Slejmân eben Meršed, one of the ancestors of the reigning family of the Sba'a tribe, died and was buried at Dejr az-Zôr on the right bank of the Euphrates. The merchants of that town, with whom he was always on friendly terms, had a small dome erected over his grave. It is said that whenever the members of his kin come there they sacrifice a camel by the dome, saying: "We think of thee, Slejmân; Oh, mayst thou have pity on us and our parents!" after which they besmear the tombstone with the blood of the sacrificed animal, *jeḫaṭṭeṭûn naṣîbeh*. But Blejhân, a subject of Eben Meršed, stated that the camels are killed there by merchants from Dejr az-Zôr and not by any Bedouins. Bṭejjen eben Midbaṛ eben Meršed was buried at the mouth of the valley of al-Arḳaṭ. His

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of Eben Fâjez near Žerjet Abu Gâber and remained there for thirty nights. One fat she-camel was killed in his honor every day. The peace treaty ends with the words: "Interred and buried, *ḥafâr w-defân*," or: "Interred and buried under a steep bank, *damdûm w-ǧurfen mahdûm*; a steep river bank has fallen upon its shadow, *ǧurfen inhadam ʿala ẓelleh*; no wolf will hurt the sheep any more, *mâ ḏîben jaʿdi ʿala-š-šaʿ*."

The chiefs then grasp each other's right hands and say: "I give thee Allâh and the peace of Allâh. And whoever would deceive thee, may Allâh deceive him! I give thee Allâh against all instigation and calumny. *Aʿṭajtak allâh w-amân al'âh w-min bâḳak jebûḳeh allâh aʿṭajtak ʿan al-mesmesijje w-al-maḥâči-r-radijje*."

THE TRIBAL EMBLEM, ABU-D-DHÛR

The Rwala have no flag of their own. They go on raids without any special device; but when waging war, whether of aggression or defense, that endangers the whole tribe, they take with them a special kind of a litter, called Abu-d-Dhûr or al-Markab. This is perhaps the old decorated litter ʿAṭfa destined originally for the prettiest girl, who used to lead the tribe to the decisive battle. But there is nobody now who can remember that a girl has ever sat in it. The Markab litter (Fig. 59) is constructed of stout poles, the frame being about 90 centimeters high, 270 centimeters long at the top, and 190 centimeters long and about 50 centimeters wide at the bottom. All the poles are wrapped round with ostrich feathers; to the upper poles are tied 12 short pegs, *zerânîž*, with plumes of bent ostrich feathers, *ṛalab*. To be loaded, the Markab is placed in the litter called *ḥaraǧ*, and this is tied to a camel with ropes, *mečârib*. The *ḥaḳab* rope is drawn through under the breast, the *bṭâne* under the belly, the *ṭafar* under the tail, and the *lebab*, twisted from variegated camel's hair threads, under the neck. The single parts of the Markab litter (Fig. 58) are called: *ḥaraǧ* (*a*), *ʿidân al-haraǧ* (*b*), *bdûd* (this because they rest on the cushion, *bedd* (*c*), *ḥoṣra* (*d*), *mibṭâḥ* (*e*), *ǧenûb* (*f*), *ǧerâjed* (*g*), *zerânîž* (*h*), and *ṛalab* (*j*).

The Rwala believe that the litter is called Abu-d-Dhûr, Father of Indefinite Periods of Time, because it is inherited from generation to generation, from age to age, *min ǧîlen ila ǧîl*, and that it will last forever. Al-Markab forms the visible

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date) 1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

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token of princely power, and therefore this litter remains in the prince's tent all the time, in the part of the tent reserved for the women; here it is guarded, day and night, both by the prince himself and by his slaves, against everybody and

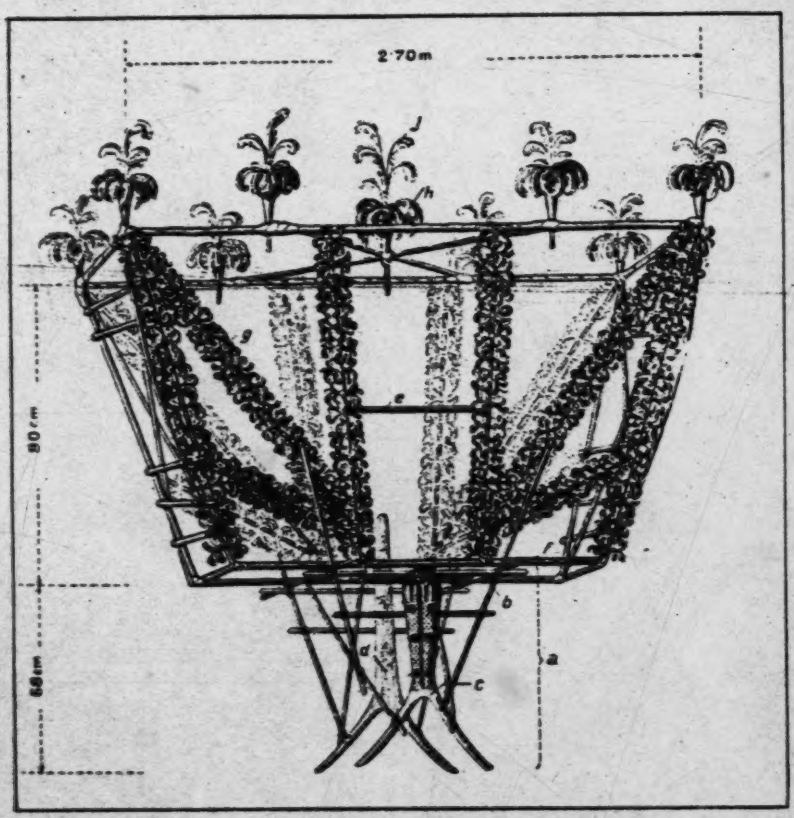

FIG. 58—Abu-d-Dhûr or al-Markab litter.

especially against the prince's nearest kinsmen. For, if a revolt breaks out in the reigning kin against the prince, his opponents attempt first of all to snatch the Abu-d-Dhûr away from him, as he who has this emblem of the whole tribe in his possession must be recognized as their prince. Should the enemy at war with the Rwala succeed in capturing the Abu-d-Dhûr, the respect for it would be entirely lost, and the Rwala would not use it again. To carry this litter when the tribe migrates, an especially strong and docile camel, usually one

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date)1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

of white color, is selected. The animal then, as a rule, walks between the laden camels and the herds, thus forming the center of all the migrating families.

When attacked by an enemy in force on the march, the

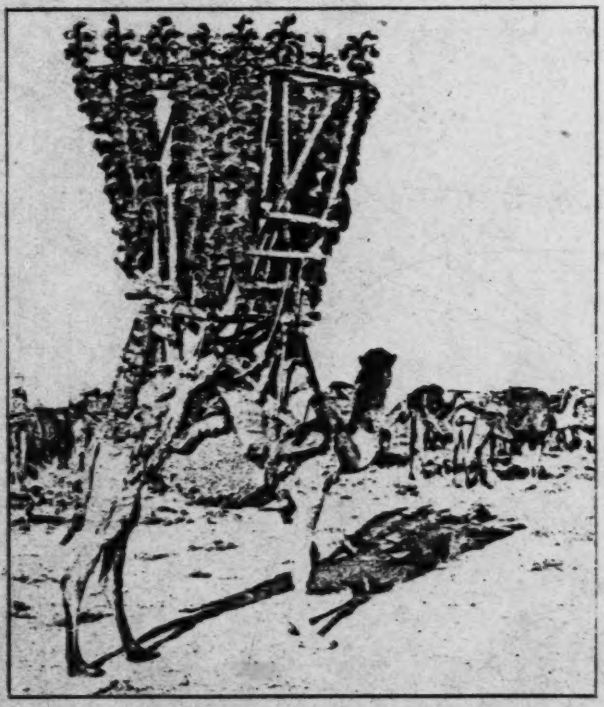

FIG. 59—Abu-d-Dhûr or al-Markab litter.

best fighters at once surround the Abu-d-Dhûr to protect it. If it seems that the enemy will push back the fighters resisting his attack and that he will break through to the pack camels, the commander of the chosen troop of fighters (called *ṣanam*) who defend the Markab will take the camel carrying this symbol by the rein and lead her at the head of his troop against the enemy. The *ṣanam* are accompanied by girls seated on she-camels, who encourage the men to persevere, and behind them follow women who threaten to beat to death any one who deserts the Abu-d-Dhûr and flees. So far no enemy has succeeded in defeating the Rwala sufficiently to take the Abu-d-Dhûr away from them. The prince, it must be said, is very

726 prudent — the more dangerous the region through which the
778 tribe has to pass when migrating, or where it encamps, the nearer together stand the tents of the various camps.

When the Rwala engage in a war of *al-manâḥ* (see above, pp. 540f.), during which they move with all their herds and tents into an enemy's territory, the camel carrying the Abu-d-Dhûr walks at the head of the whole tribe, surrounded by warriors who follow every movement of the animal with the closest
787 attention. They believe that Allâh gives signs by means of
778 the Abu-d-Dhûr,[1] from which the outcome of the fight can be foretold. Sometimes, in a dead calm, the ostrich feathers adorning the Abu-d-Dhûr begin to flutter. At other times the litter leans to the right or left, but suddenly straightens itself, remains quietly upright, and then rocks a few times from side to side. All this, the Rwala think, happens by the power of Allâh, *ḳudrat min allâh*, who sends them help, *ʿenâje*, from al-Markab, where He is believed to seat himself for a while. The waving of the feathers and the straightening of the Abu-d-Dhûr are signs that Allâh has touched it with his power.

782 After each victory a camel is killed before the Abu-d-Dhûr in honor of Allâh. This is also done every year, even if the Rwala have had no war to which the Abu-d-Dhûr had to be taken.

NARRATIVES OF RWALA WARS AND RAIDS

539* 726* ***Ad-Drêʿi eben Šaʿlân's Raid on the Ẓefir (Early Nineteenth Century)***

Of their wars and raids much was related to me by the Rwala.

In bygone days (at the beginning of the nineteenth century) they had a head chief named ad-Drêʿi eben Šaʿlân, who was celebrated for his bravery, *w-leh ṣît bel-furse*. Once, while encamped with his Arabs west of the Ḥawrân mountains, he heard of the defeat of Eben Haddâl, the head chief of the ʿAmârât, who, while migrating with his tribe, was attacked by the Ẓefir chief, Sulṭân eben Swejṭ, and despoiled of all he had. During the fight one of the enemy's warriors had tried to seize a pack camel guarded by Ḥoṣṣa, Eben Haddâl's daughter. She had defended her animal from the man as best she could, but when he struck her she had cried out: "Ad-Drêʿi, O my hero! *W-ṣâḥat ad-drêʿi jâ raǧǧâli.*"

1 [See pp. 571–573, cat. 116, — Analyst]